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Rural Maryland Council Winter 2016 Newsletter

Greetings!

The Rural Maryland Council met on Wednesday December 2, 2015 in Annapolis and elected officers for the 2016 calendar year. The Council elected the following officers:

Chair: Ms. Doris Mason

First Vice Chair: Mr. Josh Hastings

Second Vice Chair: Mr. Matt Tefteau

We continuously strive to be an instrument of collaboration among federal, state, and local government, for-profit, nonprofit and grassroots organizations. We welcome your input and participation, and look to you, members of the rural community, to develop an understanding of how we can best do our work. Please feel free to contact us at (410) 841-5772 or rmc.mda@maryland.gov. We want to hear your thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Davis

Upcoming Events

Volunteer Maryland/RMC

Information Session -

Salisbury

February 25

2:00pm - 4:00pm

FREE and Open to Everyone!

[Register](#)

Volunteer Maryland/RMC

Information Session -

Columbia

March 2

2:00pm - 4:00pm

FREE and Open to Everyone!

[Register](#)

"Farmland" Screening at Caroline County Public Library

March 2

7:00pm - 10:00pm

FREE and Open to Everyone!

[Register](#)

RMC Executive Board Meeting

April 8

RMC ***In the News***

December 28

[My Eastern Shore, Maryland](#)

January 7

[The Star Democrat](#)

January 20

[Southern Maryland News Net](#)

Message from the Chair

I am delighted to be leading the council this year, there are so many exciting things to look forward to in 2016!

First, I am excited to announce Governor Hogan has funded \$2,000,000 in the budget for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. This is the first time Rural Prosperity has been funded. The fund will support economic development in rural areas, infrastructure improvement projects, entrepreneurship programs, including business training classes at community colleges, and health care programs.

We are also looking forward to developing a strategic plan for the council. To help implement strategies that will best serve our rural communities, we want to hear from you. What are your thoughts on future rural issues? [Contact the council](#), and let us know how best we can serve you!

Best wishes,
Doris Mason
Chair

Maryland Celebrates Rural Maryland Day



Charlotte Davis, Executive Director, and Doris Mason, Chair, Rural Maryland Council, are presented with the Rural Maryland Day State Proclamation by Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Deputy Chief of Staff, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Governor.

The Rural Maryland Council convened in Annapolis last week on Thursday, February 11, 2016, which was proclaimed Rural Maryland Day by Governor Larry Hogan. "We are here today to collaborate (with), celebrate and advocate our legislators regarding the status of

February 5

[Cumberland Times News](#)

February 19

[The Star Democrat](#)

[Subscribe Today!](#)



2016

MidAtlantic Telehealth Resource Center Summit

April 10 - 12, 2016

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Cambridge, MD

The 2016 program, "Improving Lives through Advances in Technology and Meaningful Data," will explore what a fully integrated & connected healthcare can look like ~ from grocery store kiosks to an integrated EMR and tele-visits to apps. By addressing "Better Health, Better Care, & Lower Cost", the 2016 MATRC Telehealth Summit explores how and why telehealth must intersect with both health system transformation and meaningful use if we are to successfully impact all three dimensions of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's (IHI) "Triple Aim":

- Improving the patient experience of care (including quality and satisfaction);
- Improving the health of populations; and
- Reducing the per capita cost of health care.

Register at

[2016 MATRC Summit](#)

Contact Us

To Advertise
Here

(with), celebrate and educate our legislators regarding the status of our rural communities in Maryland," said Rural Maryland Council Chair, Doris Mason. "Rural residents are working to provide all of the people in our fine state with food, fiber and fuel. Our rural economies are a critical component of our state's overall economy."

Members of the Rural Maryland Council met with members of the Maryland General Assembly on several pieces of legislation before the Legislature.

2015 Rural Summit - Aspire Maryland

*Thank you to attendees, speakers and
sponsors!*

THANK YOU to all our attendees, sponsors, and speakers! The Rural Summit held on December 3, 2015 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Annapolis drew more than 230 attendees who wanted to share their ideas and concerns about Rural Maryland.

The keynote speaker was Sheila Bair, 28th president of Washington College and former chair of the FDIC. Bair gained national prominence for her leadership during the financial crisis of 2007-2008, and was twice named the second most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine. She is Washington College's first female president and the author of several books, including *The Bullies of Wall Street*.

The biannual Summit brought together professionals and grass root individuals from throughout Rural Maryland. Attendees included residents, State and local government leaders, grass root nonprofit organizations that work in rural communities, and professionals representing health care, economic development, agriculture, forestry, workforce development, and community development. A highlight of the Summit was the Rural Impact Awards Luncheon, recognizing individuals and organizations that have done outstanding work. The following were acknowledged:

- The late Helen Astle, honored for the Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer;
- Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland, honored with the Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award;
- Frederick County Public Schools and MyPlate Garden Program, honored with the Outstanding Rural Community Development Award; and
- Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Governor's Office, honored with the Rural Champion Award.

WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK. Let us know your thoughts on this event. [Click here.](#)

Ask us how!

Call us at
(410) 841-5772
or email
rmc.mda@maryland.gov

Farm Service Agency Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by [your local FSA office](#) for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Rural Aspirations!

Rural Maryland is intrigued by the question, "What do you Aspire for rural Maryland?" and is embracing the positive message.

The short film was accepted to the Southern Maryland Film Festival in Leonardtown, and the upcoming film festivals in Easton and Cumberland.



"Farmland" Screening at Caroline County Public Library

On Wednesday, March 2, at 7 p.m., regional film lovers can gain a rare glimpse into the world of farming as the Caroline Chamber of Commerce, Rural Maryland Council and Rural Maryland Foundation present the documentary "Farmland" at the Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market Street, Denton.

The Caroline Chamber of Commerce, Rural Maryland Council, Rural Maryland Foundation are sponsoring this film created by award-winning director, James Moll. It will be preceded by the special presentation of the short video "Rural Aspirations," which was produced by the Rural Maryland Council through Foundation funding.

View a trailer of "Farmland" [here](#). The screening is **FREE** and open to everyone. Visit our website to learn more and [register to attend here](#).

The [Caroline Chamber of Commerce](#) is a networking, information and growth resource for businesses, nonprofits, government institutions and other organizations as well as interested individuals. Their goal is to serve as the center for development, education, communication, and partnerships within the Caroline County business community.

RMC on Social Media



Help Us Get The Message Out!

If you have a newsletter, website or social media platform, please consider posting our Rural Aspirations video.

Facebook
[/ruralmaryland.council](https://www.facebook.com/ruralmaryland.council)



Twitter
[@RuralMaryland](https://twitter.com/RuralMaryland)

Commercial Wood Energy Grants Available

Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) has announced the first Commercial Wood Energy Grant Program to improve adoption of clean burning wood technology that is renewable and widely available, but not well known.

The MEA grant program will provide grants to conduct wood energy feasibility studies up to \$15,000 to eligible facilities in Maryland; MEA has partnered with the Maryland Wood Energy Coalition to provide an educational webinar to educate potential applicants.

Experts will provide webinar attendees with knowledge to:

- Understand potential applications for wood energy conversion systems using real case studies of schools, hospitals and other applications;
- Access information about the sustainability of wood resources from urban and traditional forestry sources; and
- Provide specifics about the grant program and how to apply.

The grant application deadline is March 30th. [Learn more...](#)

Housing Preservation Grant Deadline

Extended

FY 2016 HPG NOSA Grants, available through the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, deadline has been extended until March 15, 2016.

[And let us know your aspirations](#)

Thank you for your consideration.

Renter's Tax Credit - You May Be Eligible!

Most Maryland residents know they're entitled to a tax credit for owning their own home. But did you know qualified renters in Maryland can also take advantage of available tax credits?

The Renters' Tax Credit Program is available to qualified renters in Maryland who meet the specific eligibility requirements. If rent exceeds a fixed amount in relation to the renters' income, the renter may be able to receive a credit up to, but not exceeding, \$750. Not every Marylander who rents their home is eligible for the tax credit. To qualify for the Renter's Tax Credit the resident(s) must:

- Be legally responsible for the rent;
- Be age 60 or over, or 100% disabled;
- Be a surviving spouse of one who otherwise would have been eligible;
- Or, if a resident is under age 60, they must have had at least one dependent under the age of 18 living with them, and didn't receive federal or state housing subsidies or reside in public housing, and the combined income of all residents of the home is below the allowable guidelines during the year they apply for the credit.

The deadline to apply for the credit is September 1 of the year in which the credit will apply.

Applications are available online, via email, or by calling the Tax Credits Telephone Service at 410-767-4433 (in Baltimore) or toll-free 1-800-944-7403.

For more information, and specific guidelines on qualifications for the Renter's Tax Credit, please visit the agency's website or call the Tax Credits Telephone Service at 410-767-4433 (in Baltimore) or toll-free 1-800-944-7403.

The Council of State Governments Newsletter Article on Broadband Expansion

"Building Partnerships for Broadband Expansion"
by Paul Czarnecki, National Association of State
Technology Directors

Rural communities shouldn't have to settle for slower Internet speeds.

to, 2016.

The program provides grants to sponsoring organizations for the repair or rehabilitation of housing occupied by low and very low income people.

Learn more about the program and apply [here](#).

Agriculture Research & Education Grant Opportunities

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) funds a range of research and education projects for farmers, ranchers, extension agents, nonprofits, students, and communities, among others. Grant funding and availability vary per state and project. Visit [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education's grant webpage](#) to learn more.

The USDA is now accepting applications for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) to fund projects that will enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards. Visit the [Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative website](#) to apply.

"Understanding Acidified Foods" Workshop

The Maryland Department of Agriculture will be offering an "Understanding Acidified Foods" training with Dr. Y. Martin Lo on Wednesday, April 6, 2016 from 8:30am to 5pm.

Canning salsa, pickles, and other acidified foods for sale require special training. Whether you have a business that you wish to expand, or you are just in the planning stages, the Acidified Foods Workshop will be helpful to you.

This class is designed to teach the basics of food safety requirements and regulation in the manufacture of acidified foods in Maryland.

To learn more or to register, contact Carol Reynolds, carol.reynolds@maryland.gov, 410-841-5769.

That was the message of Jonathan Chambers, chief of the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis at the Federal Communications Commission, addressing the National Association of State Technology Directors at its annual conference in Cincinnati last month.

Chambers said the Federal Communications Commission-or FCC-is committed to partnering with the states and the private sector to extend the reach of broadband Internet to public institutions and rural areas.

The effort to expand broadband Internet to public schools and libraries will draw its funding from the FCC's E-Rate component of the Universal Service Fund. The Universal Service Fund established by the Communications Act of 1934, was originally created to provide telephony services to low-income and rural areas. With an update from the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Universal Service Fund now covers advanced telecommunications services, including internet service.

According to Chambers, the FCC made comprehensive reforms to the Universal Service Fund in 2014 that transformed the E-Rate program component from "one that subsidized service to one that invests in infrastructure." Also, he said, beginning next year the program will provide additional funding-up to 10 percent-for wide area network circuits and Internet access to match state funding for special construction charges for high-speed broadband connections. These services have first funding priority with a newly established program cap of \$3.9 billion.

Chambers said he believes the matching funds are attractive to states with broadband expansion projects in mind. While Chambers agreed that the FCC and government agencies should be "technology neutral," he said the FCC is committed to investing in fiber infrastructure for public schools and libraries for the next three to five years. In addition, Chambers said the FCC will work with private sector telecommunications companies and Internet service providers to expand broadband to rural areas through the Connect America Fund, another component of the Universal Service Fund.

In January 2015, the FCC revised its definition of broadband from four megabits per second for downloads and one megabit per second per upload to 25 megabits per second for downloads and three megabits per second per download. Under this new definition, the

FCC maintains that 55 million Americans, 17 percent of the population, do not have access to broadband Internet service.

Chambers acknowledged that companies such as AT&T and Verizon do not have to build in rural areas on their own due to the high cost and low return of investing in such projects, but to date, 10 telecommunications providers have accepted funding from the CAF to help in this effort. According to an Aug. 27 press release from the

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program, available through USDA Rural Development, helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world. These grants, which are awarded through a competitive process, may be used to fund telecommunications-enabled information, audio and video equipment, and related advanced technologies which extend educational and medical applications into rural areas.

Eligible applicants include most entities that provide education or health care through telecommunications including most State and local governmental entities, Federally Recognized Tribes, Nonprofits, For-profit businesses, Consortia of eligible entities, etc.

Past projects have used grant funds to:

- provide high risk/specialty consultation to remote areas with no access enable college faculty provide college-level courses to students in rural high schools
- build network connections, video conferencing technology and a training program for staff
- install teleconferencing and telehealth equipment in facilities in medically underserved areas

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program will also host webinars to inform participants about the major eligibility and regulatory requirements of the program. These sessions will provide detailed guidance on how to submit a successful grant application and participants can ask specific questions about putting together an application.

The application is open until March 14, 2016. Learn more about the program and webinars [here](#).

to help in this effort. According to an Aug. 27 press release from the FCC, telecommunications providers have accepted \$1.5 billion that will "expand broadband to nearly 7.3 million rural consumers in 45 states nationwide and one U.S. territory over the next few years." For states that have no providers offering broadband expansion support, the FCC will allocate the remaining CAF funding through a competitive bidding process.

Chambers said that making high speed Internet access available throughout the country is a goal shared by both the federal government and the states, and that is why the FCC is looking to "partner with states that have the ability and the desire to make rural broadband a reality."

"The FCC is looking for partners with the same vision," he said.

Additional Resources:

Federal Communications Commission <https://www.fcc.gov/>

National Association of State Technology Directors
www.nastd.org

Advanced Manufacturing Production (AMP) - Caroline County

Caroline County has a strong manufacturing base and is launching a new two-year curriculum to prepare high school students for manufacturing careers.

The County plans to work with manufacturers throughout the Eastern Shore to place students in apprenticeships and full-time employment upon graduation.

Check out the video below to learn more about the program!



Rural Maryland Council is an independent state agency and Maryland's federally designated State Rural Development Council under the United States Department of Agriculture's National Rural Development Partnership. Our mission is to bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to develop and implement policy solutions. As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates under the guidance of a 40-member Executive Board, in a nonpartisan and non-discriminatory manner.

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